







KIDD'S  
"SOCIAL EVOLUTION."

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## V. KIDD'S SOCIAL EVOLUTION.<sup>1</sup>

IN his recent book on *Darwinianism* Mr. Stirling quotes from a letter of Dr. Thomas Brown to the elder Darwin, as follows:

"SIR: In acknowledging the delight which I received from the perusal of *Zoönomia*, I only agree with the public voice. I am, however, surprised, that while every one has been delighted, no one as yet has answered. The transition is natural from passive admiration to a strict examination. Such, at least, was my mental history on reading. The reasoning appeared to me in some passages more specious than solid. I, therefore, for my own amusement, marked down my observations."

Thus "expatiating Brown," then at the mature age of eighteen, modestly expressed himself in regard to the then celebrated work of the great Erasmus Darwin. The quotation not unfairly expresses our own impression of Mr. Kidd's *Social Evolution*, and may serve as a fitting introduction to our comments upon it.

Mr. Kidd's book proved an immediate success. It received speedy and flattering recognition from the public. It has been widely read and much talked of; the daily and weekly press has praised it highly. It has been called a remarkable book; certainly it is an able and stimulating book, and its success has been deserved. There is ample reason for the popularity of *Social Evolution*. It treats a live subject, and meets a demand of the time. It treats a difficult, not to say an abstruse, subject, yet it is not a hard book to read. Though needlessly repetitious, and by no

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<sup>1</sup>A paper read before the Sociological Society of Princeton Seminary. Although this paper was written before the appearance of Mr. Kidd's article in the February number of *The Nineteenth Century*, I have not deemed it necessary, after reading what is practically a brief restatement of his argument, to make any changes in what I had written; nor do I find it necessary to add anything; which is, perhaps, fortunate, since, though the subject is boundless, the space at my disposal is limited. On the contrary, Mr. Kidd's article has rather confirmed me in the positions that I had taken. I venture, moreover, to think that I have avoided the error into which Mr. Kidd, not unjustly, complains that his critics have for the most part fallen, the tendency, namely, "to draw off attention into subsidiary channels and upon merely side-issues," to the neglect of the fundamental theses and central argument of the book.

means free from inelegancies and inaccuracies of diction, it is written in a plain, straightforward style which carries the reader easily along. Mr. Kidd is certainly not a stylist—far from it—but he moves on. His treatment of his subject is popular in character, yet with all the appearance of being scientific in method. He has a great theme, and he treats it in broad outline. He is mowing over a big field, and he cuts a wide swath. He belongs to the impressionist school, and is working on a large canvas in bold, strong strokes. Details are so unimportant that he can afford to be inaccurate in regard to them, provided the *ensemble* is vivid, provided he makes you see and feel as he felt and saw; and in this he succeeds admirably. The picture is clear and strong enough; the only question is, Is it true? Can water be such a blue, grass such a green, shadows such?

I suppose that a book which did not provoke thought, and that did not raise many more questions than it answered, would not amount to much. Mr. Kidd's book, as already remarked, certainly stimulates thought and is fertile in suggestion; hence it is well worth reading. To us, moreover, it is interesting as another illustration of the fact that religion (whatever may be true or false of it in its various different forms of manifestation) is, at all events, a phenomenon that has come, and has come to stay, and that it is a tremendous social force, with which every one, willingly or not, has to reckon. We admire especially the fine spirit in which Mr. Kidd writes. If we cannot join in the unstinted praise of his book, it is because we do not find ourselves in agreement with two or three, at least, of what we take to be his fundamental theses. *Social Evolution* is open to, and is likely to meet with, some pretty severe attacks. No doubt the very fact of its general popularity would imply that the specialist will not treat it kindly, even as Mr. Stirling's brilliant book above mentioned, after being warmly praised by the many who rejoice in his style of "elevated recklessness," was fanned by the whirlwind of the biologists' criticism; for scientists write "no admittance," in letters large enough, over the entrances to their particular specialties, however ready they may be to make excursions into other provinces—nay, to construe the universe by running it into the groove of their own

departments. For our own part, I trust that we are not so jealous. We like, for example, to hear what Professor Huxley has to say about ethics, especially when he comes, as it were, modestly under the mantle of an ancient moralist, as in his recent Romanes Lecture, to which he prefixes the very proper sentiment from Seneca: "*Soleo enim et in aliena castra transire, non tanquam transfuga, sed tanquam explorator.*" But we have changed all that since Seneca, and in these days, when one scarcely dares call his soul his own, for fear of the specialists, I see nothing for the theologian and the biblical critic to do except to do as the rest—to stand up for the dignity of his department; to insist that he, too, is a specialist; and to smile pityingly upon the outsider who ventures to intrude with his opinion. Why should Mr. Huxley discourse to us of Semitic tradition, or the Gadarene swine? Or why should any one give the least heed to him, if he does?

Mr. Kidd's aim is to apply the Darwinian method to man in society. The book opens with an admirable *resumé* of the present social situation: "Despite the great advances which science has made during the past century in almost every other direction, there is, it must be confessed, no science of human society, properly so called." Science, which has accomplished such splendid achievements during the last century, when she ascends in the scale of life and comes to man, stands helpless in his presence. The reason of this is, that science has not been true to her calling. At the very place where she ought to apply her method most thoroughly, she has stopped short. The historian especially, though he is "dealing with the record of life in its highest forms," . . . strange to say, feels "it scarcely necessary to take any interest in those sciences [namely, the biological] which, in the truest sense, lead up to his subject." The only hope for history and for social science is, "for the biologist to advance over the frontier and carry the methods of his science boldly into human society, where he has but to deal with the phenomena of life, where he encounters life at last under its highest and most complex aspect." This, then, is what Mr. Kidd attempts. We cannot help thinking: What a pity it is that Gibbon was not a biologist; and what a splendid account of the Sicilian expedition Thucydides

might have given us, had he only been acquainted with the Darwinian hypothesis!

We may, perhaps, at the outset raise a query as to the legitimacy of Mr. Kidd's so-called new method. Will the biological method suffice to explain the social organism? Will an examination of the lower forms of life suffice to explain the higher? Are we to explain a development in terms of its lower or of its higher stages? The answer to these questions would introduce us to one of the main points at issue between Hegelians and Spencerians. Here it must suffice to say that the idealists undoubtedly have the best of the argument. We can only know what man is by seeing a full-grown human being. One who saw a child could not possibly predict what he would become, unless he had already seen one that *had* become. Study of the acorn would not lead us to a knowledge of the spreading oak.

This, of course, does not mean that we are not to derive all the help we can from the study of the lower stages in the development of that which we are trying to interpret. It does not mean that we are not to get what light we can by tracing the historic growth of the moral sentiments; nor that there is nothing to learn in seeking the genesis of the idea of God. It does not mean that the study of comparative anatomy is unessential to a knowledge of the human body. It does not mean that a knowledge of the process will not help us to an understanding of the product. It only means that antecedence is not identical with causality, and that similarity is not identity. It means that, having traced *g* back to *f*, and *f* to *e*, and so on back to *a*, the origin, we are then to find the key to the process, not in the starting-point, but in the whole process as seen from the end to the beginning. In other words, the true nature of anything can be known, not from the ἐξ οὗ, but from the τέλος.

On the other hand, this does not mean that, because what is last in time may be first in thought, we are therefore first to study the finished product, and then to read into the beginning of the process everything that we have found at the end; that we are to attribute sensation to plants, or thought to shell-fish, or conscience to birds of prey. Professor Drummond's rhapsody on



the death of the flowers, or his discovery of the first great act of the moral life in "the conscious self-sacrifice of protoplasmic fission," speaks very highly for his poetic imagination, but will not increase his reputation as a man of science. It may be worth while to remark in passing, that, while it is customary to twit theists and Christian theologians with making their God in their own image, the anthropomorphism which does this (and there is sufficient reason for it, apart from Scripture) is nothing to the anthropomorphism which attributes to plant and brute creation all the characteristics which are properly distinctive of man. It may be that "man, who was made in the image of God, was also made in the form of the ape"; but it by no means follows that the ape, or the insect, or the oyster is a ζῶον λογικὸν πολιτικὸν φιλόλογον.

If, for example, it can be shown that conscience in man presents points of similarity to instinct in brutes, it by no means follows that there is no more in conscience than there is in instinct, so that to trace the former back to the latter is to give a final explanation of the idea of obligation. It makes small difference whether (with Mr. Spencer) you begin with instinct, and derive conscience from it, or whether (with Professor Drummond), starting from the other end, and finding moral obligation in man, you give a moral value to the instinctive acts of brutes, if, after all, conscience and instinct are only different names for the same thing. Most certainly they are not the same; and we cannot see that Professor Drummond gains very much by taking his science from Mr. Spencer and reading it backwards by the light of Professor Caird's evolutionary philosophy, while practically ignoring (though he quotes Professor Caird at length on this very point) what is just here the most important point of all; for, as Professor Caird shows, the very notion of development should carry with it the implication that there is *more* in the later steps than there was in the earlier; and if these accretions bring with them not only quantitative, but qualitative additions as well, as undoubtedly they do, it is obvious that what may have been an adequate account of the earlier and simpler form may leave untouched the new elements which have come in.

The bearing of this on *Social Evolution* is not far to seek. It



means that what is a right scientific method for one branch of science, for one stage in a development, is inadequate for another and higher stage. No one would assert that the method of the pure mathematician would suffice for the chemist, or the chemist's method for the biologist. The higher sphere implies greater complexity, new factors to deal with; hence, changed methods. Now, with the advent of man certain new factors come into play, with which the biologist has not had to reckon. These are: man's social capacities, his reason, and his religious instincts. Mr. Kidd, indeed, fully recognizes this, and is at great pains to emphasize the fact; yet, so far, at least, as method is concerned, he practically ignores it; for he first determines what are the conditions of progress in the sphere of biology, and then transfers these conditions bodily from biology to the social organism, tacitly assuming that what is true in the lower sphere is necessarily true also in the higher, which by no means follows. It by no means necessarily follows, for instance, that because, in the non-human world, progress may be comprehensively defined in terms of "the struggle for existence," that the struggle for existence is the sufficient explanation of progress in the world of man. It is rather curious, however, and, perhaps, worthy of remark, that this very idea of "the struggle for existence" was first suggested to Darwin by reading Malthus *On Population*; so that now Mr. Kidd, borrowing his constructive principle from biology, and applying it to man in society, is only returning to Darwin's starting-point.

The chief peculiarity of Mr. Kidd's book consists, however, not so much in the application of the biological method to man in society—for that had been done before—as in the fact that he builds upon the hypothesis which represents the most advanced thought at the present time in biology. The biologists, as every one knows, are divided into two camps in regard to the very important point as to whether or not inherited characteristics can be transmitted. If they can, then it is easy to see how Mr. Spencer can build up his moral system on the principle that ethical ideas grow *pari passu* with the development of society, this society being an organism so constituted that the interests of the individual members of it and the general interest of the whole tend to come

into equilibrium. Altruism is not only as natural as egoism, but it is as essential to the well-being of the individual. The Weismannists, on the other hand, emphasize the idea of struggle; they admit no disinterested, altruistic actions, scarcely even coöperation. Here we have a fundamental difference of much significance upon a point as to which few of us have any right to an opinion. Here the roads part, and it is, obviously, of the greatest consequence which one we choose to follow. If sociology be only "biology 'writ large,'" it makes all the difference in the world to the former what the small letters spell. If the foundations are utterly dissimilar, the superstructures cannot present the same proportions. What are we to do when the doctors of science disagree; when, for example, Professor Huxley and Mr. Kidd define progress in terms of "the struggle for life," and tell us that there is nothing ethical about nature; that "the cosmic process has no sort of relation to moral ends"; that "the imitation of it by man is inconsistent with the first principles of ethics"; while Mr. Spencer and Professor Drummond, making much of altruism and the struggle for the life of others, would teach us that "all nature is on the side of the man who tries to rise," and that nature is "henceforth to become the ethical teacher of the world"? If the temple of truth in the sphere of social science is to be builded upon the foundations of biology, we fear that the time has not yet come. Until there is more agreement than at present exists among naturalists, they can scarcely contribute much toward the solution of social problems. "Physician, heal thyself." If the Weismannists are wrong, it is obvious that many of Mr. Kidd's conclusions must be vitiated for us at the start, since he builds his entire system upon their (as yet unproved) hypothesis, unless the results he reaches can be separated from his method; and this, I think, is to some extent possible. Indeed, it seems to me that his book is valuable just in proportion as it is possible to separate its results from the method employed in reaching them, and that most of the author's paradoxes result just from an imperfect method.

For suppose we admit that the doctrine of natural selection is sufficient to account for progress from the beginning up to and

including man the individual, it by no means follows that this principle will apply to man in society. Mr. Kidd assumes that society is an organism; but, if so, it is difficult to see how the interests of the individual can always be antagonistic to the interests of the organism, and *vice versa*, as Mr. Kidd says they are. We do not so reason in regard to other organisms. Physicians endeavor to build up the system, in order to overcome local disorders; and, conversely, inflammation or disease of the members affects the health of the whole body. So, also, the different parts are dependent upon each other. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Here Mr. Spencer, who was in this particular point anticipated by Paul, is certainly more self-consistent than Mr. Kidd.

Again, Mr. Kidd assumes that the interests of the organism are of paramount importance, and that it does not matter about the individual, except, of course, to the individual himself. We need some one to show that the organism exists for the individual, as well as the individual for the organism; and certainly, on the basis of a materialistic evolution, this would seem to be more logical and natural: for, if there be no intelligence back of the process for which the organism could be said to exist, then man is the highest intelligence in the universe, and it is right that he should be regarded as the end for which the universe exists, the goal toward which the cosmic process has been working. It would seem strange to make the highest life in the universe subordinate to a life such as that manifested in an unteleological cosmic process. If the individual exists for the organism, this theory needs a God, a Higher Intelligence, to help it out; otherwise what is highest in the order of life would be only means to end: intellect, spirit, will, would be the servants of matter.

If, however, it be said that the individual exists, not as subordinate to an unintelligent cosmic process, but as a part, a member of society, and that it is the social organism as constituted by individuals, and not the individuals themselves, that is of importance, then it may be asked: Why am not I as worthy of consideration as my neighbor? Why should I consider the organism with its future unborn millions? My own interests, my own

pleasure and happiness, are of as much account as the happiness of the human beings who shall live five hundred or five thousand years hence. In other words, we find here the same antinomy that exists between egoistic and universalistic hedonism. If you define conduct in terms of pleasure and pain merely, it is difficult to make the transition from one's self to one's neighbor. When individual and social interests are harmonious, well and good; there is then a rational sanction for conduct in the nature of things. But suppose interests clash. Humanity is the fruit and flower of nature, the highest life in the universe, the end toward which nature has been striving; but why one man rather than another? Why my neighbor rather than myself? As we shall see later, Mr. Kidd feels this difficulty, and, in order to solve it, he is forced either to abandon materialism, or to dethrone reason. Even Mr. Spencer admits that "the welfare of the species is an end to be subserved only as subserving the welfare of individuals." "But," he adds, "since disappearance of the species, implying absolute disappearance of all individuals, involves absolute failure in achieving the end, whereas disappearance of individuals, though carried to a great extent, may leave outstanding such numbers as can, by continuance of the species, make subsequent fulfilment of the end possible, the preservation of the individual must, in a variable degree according to circumstances, be subordinated to the preservation of the species, where the two conflict." In this statement it is to be noticed, in the first place, that though preservation of the species is enjoined, this is only in order that, though many individuals may disappear, other individuals may remain to fulfil their ends. It is, after all, the individual that is of paramount importance. In the second place, Mr. Spencer has here brought in a new element, namely, the end. What, then, is the end? It is the welfare of individuals. It can, indeed, never be anything else. But there we are back at the old question, Why the welfare of one individual rather than of another? Still further, suppose you say that this welfare is not happiness, but self-development; or suppose you say that it merely is spiritual growth—"that ye may have life, and may have it more abundantly": then we may hold that the kind of life which we iden-



tify with spiritual growth would facilitate the preservation of the species. We do hold that; we should quite agree with Mr. Leslie Stephen in refusing to recognize as moral such conduct as could be shown to lead to the extinction of the species: but that is a very different thing from saying that the preservation of the species is the end. It would seem to be necessary to determine what the end of conduct or of life is, before laying down rules looking to the attainment of that end. And here, again, a metaphysic, a theory of the universe, is involved; and it ought not to be quietly assumed that economic or social progress is the end for which nature is striving.

We can better understand how those who put a spiritualistic construction upon the universe should make the individual subordinate to the organism, for in that case the whole cosmic process, the whole world of nature, inorganic, organic, human, all would be but the visible manifestation of spiritual life; the whole universe of mind and matter would exist through and for the spirit back of things—very much as the Calvinist says that all things exist for the glory of God. Man in this case might be, as it were, but a button on the garment of Deity, and, as such, of infinitely less importance than the garment itself. The garment would exist for the wearer; the button would exist for the garment.

But it is not true, Professor Haeckel to the contrary notwithstanding, that it is dualism which gives an anthropocentric construction to the universe. On the contrary, it is only a materialistic monism which can assert that "man is the central point of the universe, the last and highest final cause of creation, and that the rest of nature was created merely for the purpose of serving man." (*Monism*, p. 14.) This is at least as bad theology as it is bad science. Paul and the Hebrew prophets were as violently opposed to the anthropocentric view as were Darwin and Copernicus, though the latter names, no doubt, carried more weight, speaking as they did in the name of science, while the former spoke only by inspiration of the Most High. Dualism may teach that the individual man is of greater consequence than the sum of all the elements that enter into his non-human environment; but it does not teach "that the rest of nature was created merely for the purpose of serving man."

So much as to method. What are the results according to Mr. Kidd of the application of these principles? I shall state them very briefly. In the first place, then, the life of man is a continual struggle for existence, his own interests being invariably antagonistic to the interests of the social organism of which he forms a part. "We have a rational creature whose reason is itself one of the leading factors in the progress he is making, but who is nevertheless subject, in common with all other forms of life, to certain organic laws of existence which render his progress impossible in any other way than by submitting to conditions that can never have any ultimate sanction in his reason." "If progress is to continue, the individual must be compelled to submit to conditions of existence of the most onerous kind, which, to all appearance, his reason actually gives him the power to suspend—and all to further a development in which he has not, and in which he never can have, *qua* individual, the slightest practical interest."

And yet, strange to say, man has not ceased to make progress. He has persistently disregarded the voice of reason telling him to look out for himself. How do we explain this strange resistance on the part of man to the urging of reason and interest combined? Mr. Kidd answers it is to be explained by the phenomena of religion. Religious belief is the integrating force in the social organism, and provides "a sanction for social conduct which is always of necessity ultra-rational, and the function of which is to secure in the stress of evolution the continual subordination of the interests of the individual units to the larger interests of the longer-lived social organism to which they belong." In other words, reason teaches pure individualism, selfishness, which would put an end to progress. Yet, as a matter of fact, progress has been continuous, and is bound to continue. This is owing to the subordination of individual interests to the wider social interests. Egoism has given way to altruism, because religion has taught the latter and has enforced its teaching with positive sanctions. Yet these sanctions have themselves no foundation in reason. There is no such thing as a rational religion. "A rational religion is a scientific impossibility." What, then, does Mr. Kidd



mean by saying that there is no such thing as a rational religion? There is certainly clumsiness of statement, if not confusion of thought, here. How, in the first place, if one be a thorough-going Weismannist, can there be for such an one any such thing as a supernatural sanction? For does not Weismannism just mean that everything that is has come to be simply through the working of the cosmic process—the grinding of the wheels of nature—and are not our ideas, then, even our idea of the supernatural, simply the product, and at the same time a part, of this process? Certain arrangements of the molecules of matter have at last produced mind—or, let us say, rather, ideas, thoughts—for mind itself is only a series of thought-images strung together—“a series of feelings aware of itself.” Now what right have these ideas, these simple products of a mechanical process which distributes and arranges matter in space—what right have these misbegotten little creatures to tell us to believe in something outside or beyond (supernatural) the cosmic process (nature) which has given them birth, whose they are and whom they serve? In short, if you start with an empirical theory of knowledge, how can you ever get beyond the world of sight and sound and taste and smell? Or, to put the matter in another way, if Weismannism is materialistic, it would make the cosmic process sum up and include the universe. Nature would embrace everything that has been, is, and will be. How, then could there be anything beyond what is everything—any supernatural?<sup>1</sup> We, indeed, are not warranted in asserting that Weismannism is necessarily materialistic. Weismann himself tells us that “the mechanical conception of nature very well admits of being united with a teleological conception of the universe,” and that “without teleology there would be no mechanism.” “The consciousness,” he says, “that behind that mechanism of the universe which is alone comprehensible to us there still lies an incomprehensible teleo-

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Kidd says, in the Nineteenth Century article above cited, that it was his purpose “to state in simple, scientific terms, and *without the necessity for starting with any equipment of telological assumption*, that which presents itself to me [him] as a natural law of human evolution hitherto unenunciated.” But it is one purpose of this article to indicate that such a simple limitation of the subject as Mr. Kidd proposes is impossible.

logical universal cause, necessitates quite a different conception of the universe—a conception absolutely opposed to that of the materialist.” This is plain enough; the mechanism of natural phenomena may be but the manifestation of the plan of an intelligent first cause—may be “purpose” externalized and made to live in space, as it existed before only in thought. But Weismann does not say that he himself believes in the existence of this “Universal Cause.” What he does make clear is the statement that if there be any directive power in the universe “we must not imagine this to interfere directly in the mechanism of the universe, but to be rather behind the latter as the final cause of this mechanism.” The fact of the existence of matter and of the laws which govern it, does not satisfy our intellectual need for causality, and if we choose to *assume* a universal cause underlying the laws of nature, no one could show that such assumption is erroneous. But we can not prove that there is any “spiritual first cause of the universe,” and if there be, it is inconceivable in its nature, and of it we can say only one thing with certainty, namely, that it must be teleological. But it is certain that directive power and mechanical causes cannot work together. In other words, if there be any teleology in the universe it must reside in the mechanic who made the machine and set it going; but the machine once set in motion, cannot have crank, lever, or screw-pin touched from without. It cannot be oiled or regulated in any way. To do this would stop the natural working of its wheels. This God the clock-maker theory of the universe is not atheistic. It is nineteenth century scientific Deism; but so far as its practical bearing on morality is concerned, we may doubt whether it is so very much better than atheism. If, moreover, Weismann be asked “whether the development of the mind can be conceived as resulting from purely mechanical laws,” he answers “unhesitatingly with the pure materialist,” though he does not agree with him as to the manner in which he derives mental phenomena from matter, but would rather, as Haeckel does, attribute consciousness to matter. Further than this, in his theory of knowledge he is agnostic. His essay sums up to this: that if there be any teleological power in the universe it can only be con-

ceived of as a first cause, but by no means as a "phyletic vital force" or directive power. Thus conceiving of it, it would not be inconsistent with the mechanical conception of nature, but its existence can only be assumed, not proved.<sup>1</sup>

Our author's position is much less definite than his master's, and we can only judge his vague statements on this point by their implications. We may, therefore, ask: if the mechanical conception of nature be not inconsistent with teleology; *i. e.*, in other words, with the belief that there is a *plan* back of the developmental process, this plan implying intelligence, and religion being but the belief in and feeling of dependence upon this supreme intelligence, how, then, can religion be irrational? Teleology implies a plan. A plan implies the existence of an intelligent being. If there be such a being it cannot be irrational to hold that he exists, with whatever implications, moral or otherwise, such a belief would involve. Professor Drummond tells us that "instead of giving up nature and reason . . . Mr. Kidd should have given up Darwin." Perhaps; but allowing him to keep Darwin, if he would only concede the rationality of religion the whole thing would work out simply enough.

Mr. Kidd insists that the essential element in all religions is the conception of the supernatural. Here he undoubtedly strikes at the root of the matter, and his discussion of this point cannot be too highly praised. The chapter in which he pictures the visit of an inhabitant of another planet to our western civilization and describes the impression produced upon the visitor by the various phenomena connected with our religious life, and the chapter on "the function of religious beliefs in the evolution of society," are both admirable. We need not pause to question his right to impose his own meaning on the phrase "social organism," nor to remark upon his somewhat clumsy definition of religion—perhaps any one is foolish to attempt to define religion—and perhaps Mr. Kidd's definitions are adequate for the purpose he has in view. Neither shall we pause to inquire into the meaning of the word progress—important as such an inquiry is—it would take us too

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<sup>1</sup> Weismann, essay on "The Mechanical Conception of Nature," in *Studies in the Theory of Descent*, Vol. 1.

far afield. Mr. Kidd uses the word to indicate a change of social conditions, to signify the difference, *e. g.*, between society as it is to-day, and as it was, say a century or ten centuries ago. Such an idea of progress as this invites scrutiny, analysis. Is mere change of external conditions, mode of life, complexity of social intercourse, progress? What is progress? Does it imply that the sum total of happiness is greater than formerly? or of wealth? Has progress any moral quality? or intellectual? or is it merely economic? These are interesting and important questions, but Mr. Kidd does not touch upon them. For our present purpose it is, however, sufficient that with his fundamental contention at this point we are in most hearty agreement; the contention, *viz.*, that ethical systems always have rested, and do rest, upon the supernatural sanctions of religious belief, and that progress has been due to the conduct imposed by these sanctions. So much is clear and strong. This is a tremendous concession to religion.

But what does Mr. Kidd mean when he says that religion is irrational? Does he only mean that religion leads us into a world where the pure reason fails to penetrate? If so, he only holds with the schoolmen who said: *Fides non est contra rationem, sed supra rationem*. There may be rational grounds for the belief in the supernatural, though that belief carries with it certain ultra-rational implications. Or, does Mr. Kidd mean that the belief in the supernatural, upon which such great issues hang, is itself contrary to the dictates of reason? It is impossible to tell what he himself holds. For a man who pretends to scientific accuracy, his use of the words "rational," "irrational," "ultra-rational" and "supernatural," is bewilderingly vague. If he is intentionally non-committal, as his statement that "the question of real importance is not whether . . . these beliefs are without any foundation in reason, but whether religious systems have a function to perform in the evolution of society," would seem to imply, he has succeeded admirably in his effort to involve this point in obscurity. But the point cannot be thus evaded. If it be said that Mr. Kidd means right and that in making him pronounce belief in the supernatural to be contrary to reason we are only setting up a straw-man for a target, the answer is, that we have no desire to



misrepresent Mr. Kidd, but only to demand consistency and clearness upon a very important point. For it is not enough to say that religious beliefs "must have some immense utilitarian function to perform in the evolution which is proceeding." This is good as far as it goes, and instead of saying that religion is irrational, we would make this concession serve as an argument for the reasonableness of the belief in the supernatural; *i. e.*, just as Kant founded a moral argument for the existence of God on the necessity of finding a supernatural sanction for individual conduct, so we would say that the necessity that the social organism is under of finding a supernatural sanction for such conduct as will insure its continued life and progress is *ipso facto* an argument for the rationality of that sanction; unless, indeed, progress itself be irrational. But if progress be a good (as I take it all evolutionists must hold) then that which makes it possible must be a good, which the belief in the supernatural can scarcely be if it is founded on a lie. This is another of Mr. Kidd's paradoxes. He states the same thought in another way when he says: "The most distinctive feature of human evolution as a whole is that through the operation of the law of natural selection the race must grow ever more and more religious." We do not know how much Mr. Kidd was striving after effect in stating the matter in this way, but to those who have regarded the Darwinian hypothesis as the sworn enemy of supernatural religion this statement is sufficiently striking.

Still, the real question is, not whether a belief in the supernatural is necessary to social progress, but whether there is rational ground for such belief. Mr. Kidd shows small appreciation of the subject when he says that "this is not the question at issue at all." For suppose, in explaining the phenomena of religion, you explain religion away. The well-being and progress of society in the past and in the present has been dependent upon a morality conditioned by supernatural sanctions. But how long will these sanctions prove binding when they are shown to be irrational? Will men fear God if they believe that he is dead, or that he sleepeth, or is gone on a journey? Men have hitherto believed in religions and acted under their sanctions. How did

they come to have these beliefs? If you can explain the belief in the supernatural in a naturalistic way, you may satisfy the demands of the historic spirit by showing how these things came to be, but you may at the same time leave nothing to believe in except the belief that belief is impossible. We are in hearty sympathy with Mr. Kidd in his "impatience at the triviality and comparative insignificance of the explanation offered" by Mr. Spencer to account for our religious beliefs. But on this fundamental point Spencer's position is luminous with insight compared with Mr. Kidd's. If Spencer, in accounting for the genesis of our religious ideas, explains them away, he at least does not attempt to rear the structure of his ethical system upon the baseless fabric of a vision. On the contrary, he tells us that it is his specific object to establish rules of conduct on a scientific basis, independent of all religious sanctions. Whether he succeeds in doing so is another question. But it is beyond conjecture how Mr. Kidd, of all men, holding as he does to the religious basis of morality, of all altruistic action, holding that "if our conscious relationship to the universe is measured by the brief span of individual existence, then the intellect can know of only one duty in the individual, namely, his duty to himself to make the most of the few precious years of consciousness he can ever know," holding that without a supernatural sanction for conduct self-indulgence would reign supreme, and that nations, by neglecting the moral law, which is the law of progress, and which is founded upon the sanctions of religion, would degenerate and disappear; holding all this as the teaching of science, it is beyond conjecture, I say, how he can regard it as beside the question whether or not these religious beliefs have any foundation in reason.

Indeed, it seems to me that alike the fundamental weakness and the greatest strength of *Social Evolution* lie right here: its greatest strength in the recognition of the necessity of religion as a social factor; its fundamental weakness, more serious even than the building of the whole argument upon an unproved hypothesis, in the position the author takes in regard to the rationality of religion; for this is to build upon foundations of sand. It is to saw off the limb on which he is sitting. For to what, after all, does



his contention come? Simply to this: that what has been, will be; that because religious systems have hitherto been necessary to the working of the cosmic process in the various stages of social development, therefore they will continue to play the important part in the future that they have played in the past, because without them social progress could not continue. But why, we may ask, should progress continue? And if it does continue, whither is it tending? What is the goal, the end, the aim? This, again, is a question of metaphysics, and is beyond the sphere of the biological method. So true is it that we cannot learn from nature—*i. e.*, external, mechanical nature—alone, but must bring with us to nature the clue to its interpretation. So far as the present inquiry is concerned, it is sufficient that reason and religion made their advent together, and have always existed side by side, sometimes in harmonious coöperation, sometimes in friendly rivalry; now in armed neutrality and again in open conflict, but still together. Man has universally been a religious animal, and has acted under supernatural sanctions. But, now, suppose you de-rationalize religion, destroying the supernatural sanctions of conduct, what will happen? One of two things, either progress will stop or it must go forward under new conditions. We cannot say that either alternative is *a priori* impossible. Because a certain thing has been is no guarantee that it will continue eternally. Astronomers tell us that the planets are burning themselves out. If so, the time must come when they can no longer support life. Progress, therefore, in the sense in which we now use the word, could not be everlasting, and man must be destined sooner or later to disappear from the face of the earth. This period may be distant by millions of years. It may be that we are destined to go on developing a higher civilization, a more perfect humanity, "for a period longer than that now covered by history." We may realize many of the lofty visions of the future which Mr. Frederic Harrison so eloquently pictures, even though they do not come to pass under the religion of humanity. But we have no guarantee of this. The bloom of the flower is of short duration compared with the life of the plant which bears it. And so the flower of our civilization may endure but for a moment in com-

parison with the infinitely longer life of the world in which we live. What guarantee have we that nature, which has hitherto been as cruel to "the type" as she has been to the individual, will act more kindly toward man than toward the countless species that have forever vanished? Hitherto the disappearing type has but vanished in yielding to a higher type, one better adapted to its environments. But some day the zenith of ascent will be reached, and by the reverse process the descent toward the nadir will begin.

"Many an æon moulded earth before her highest, man, was born;  
Many an æon, too, may pass when earth is manless and forlorn."

The fact that man had outgrown religion might indicate that in the next stage of the world's history, for that "crowning race" of whom the poet speaks, morality might be fostered under new conditions, and without the aid of supernatural sanctions; but it might just as well indicate that with the loss of religious faith would begin the decay of morality and the general reverse process. Who shall say that the first step toward the time when

"Many a planet by many a sun may roll with the dust of a vanished race"

may not be taken with the derationalizing of religion? The pendulum has swung to the end of its reach; it may now swing back. The onward movement has thus far had a certain impetus, a propelling force, back of it; take that away, and may the movement not cease? Certainly it may; nay, it inevitably must cease unless some new impetus be found to take the place of the old one. Electricity might take the place of steam, but the engine could not run without any motive power whatever. Everybody, apparently, recognizes this fact, except Mr. Kidd. Hence it is that serious-minded, thinking men who have lost their own religious faith and are trying to rob the rest of the world of theirs, are endeavoring in various ways to provide a substitute for that which has been lost. Hence, too, it is that we, who do not believe in either the rationality or the practical efficacy of any of these substitutes, tenaciously cling to, and zealously defend, that belief in the supernatural which always has been, and which, it seems to us, always will be, the only rational sanction for moral-

ity and the only hope for the human race. Professor Huxley pitting the microcosm against the macrocosm, and giving the youth not even a sling with which to fight against the giant; Mr. Frederic Harrison bidding us worship humanity, and Professor Huxley replying that he would as soon worship a wilderness of apes; Mr. Spencer resolving our gods into ghosts, and telling us that duty and pleasure tend to become identical, though right be only conformity to custom; Professor Drummond following Mr. Spencer in assuring us that we need not look beyond nature for the highest sanctions for conduct, and then covertly introducing the idea of the divine (which, if it means anything at all, must mean pretty much what Mr. Kidd means by the supernatural) by including it in the environment in which the evolutionary process takes place; or Mr. Charles H. Pearson lamenting "the decay of character" and "the decline of family life," and seeking a substitute for an obligatory morality in the "religion of the state"—what if we cannot accept the doctrine of these new teachers of righteousness? The voice may be the voice of Jacob, but the hands seem to us like the hands of Esau.

Nevertheless, it is conceivable that progress may continue, though the conditions of progress may change, just as a calculating machine, as Babbage showed, might be constructed to work for any fixed length of time according to a certain law, and then might, from a certain point, proceed according to an entirely different law. To us it does not seem so strange that social progress should take place up to a certain point under ape and tiger instincts, and that beyond that point progress may continue only by letting the ape and the tiger in us die (though Professor Huxley has been criticised for splitting up "the world-order into two separate halves," and going back on his fundamental principle of continuity). This only means that with the advent of man came in certain new elements, namely, reason and conscience, in virtue of which what was before a natural or non-moral world was converted into an ethical world. Instead of the thorn has sprung up the fir tree, and instead of the brier has sprung up the myrtle tree. But the strange thing is, that these latest coëxisting products should, according to the present theory, be inherently

antagonistic. In other words, suppose we admit that progress is necessary, and say that the cosmic process, whether there be mind back of it or not, is working out its own ends in developing conscience; with the advent of conscience came also reason, which must also have a part to play, and an important part, in this great drama. But here nature seems to be divided against herself in making conscience dictate one thing and reason another. Reason says, "Strive only for self"; conscience says, "Consider your neighbor." What shall we do? The parable reminds us that this division-status is an unstable one. Nature has conceived and brought forth twins, which, instead of furthering life, seem bent upon destroying each other. Thus Professor Huxley and thus Mr. Kidd, only with this difference: that the former chooses the nobler part, and says that man must ally himself with conscience and combat the cosmic process, while the latter says that man *will not* act contrary to the dictates of reason.<sup>1</sup>

Now it is obvious that there may be two ways out of this dilemma. In the first place, we may refuse to admit the validity of the distinction between the "ethical" and the "natural"

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<sup>1</sup> It is a little curious that I should have expressed my opinion here in words so similar to those subsequently used by Mr. Kidd in a foot-note to the article above cited in deprecation of the very criticism here offered. Says Mr. Kidd: "I do not know whether any reader of *Social Evolution* who has done me the honor to study the book closely will feel that what has been said here suggests a criticism that I have taken pains to answer beforehand in the book itself, namely, that I might be taken to have represented the nature of man as a house divided against itself. I have endeavored to make it clear throughout that the religious feeling, that is, the willingness to submit to sanctions beyond reason, is not only just as much part of man's nature as any other, but that it is the most characteristic part of it—a part which is being continually developed by the process of evolution in progress. The sanction for submitting to the cosmic process is in man; it is not in his reason. It is not beyond him; it is simply beyond his reason." To which we may reply, substantially in the words of Mr. Balfour, that this resolves the religious feeling into an instinct, which is "nothing better than a device of nature to trick us into the performance of altruistic actions." It is one of nature's devices to insure the survival of the species and to further social progress, and may be fittingly compared "to the protective blotches on the beetle's back." (*Foundations of Belief*, pp. 16, 18.) The question, then, still remains as to the relation between reason and this "religious instinct;" as to whether reason can invalidate or "circumvent" this instinct, as it has already circumvented some of the most important of them. (Cf. *The Nineteenth Century*, February, 1895, p. 229.)



world, as well as the antinomy between reason and conscience. In other words, we may insist that the "struggle for the life of others" is as natural and as rational as the "struggle for life," and may seek to show not only that the interest of the individual and the welfare of the organism are always identical, but also that the moral life begins with the amœba or the oyster or the ape, as the case may be. Authorities differ. Haeckel is less complimentary to the brutes than Drummond, for the German professor holds that "it is only in the most highly developed vertebrates—birds and mammals—that we discern the first beginnings of reason, the first traces of religious and ethical conduct." Or, in the second place, we may follow Professor Huxley in refusing to see any morality in the workings of non-human nature. Ethic begins with man and not with lamprey-eels, or monkeys. This is the view taken by our author, and we have no hesitation in following him here. There remains, then, the antagonism between reason the egoist, and conscience the altruist. And this, again, can be settled in one of two ways: either by showing that there is no *casus belli* and that the would-be enemies should be friendly allies, or by the lawful, rational submission of one of the parties.

As to the former alternative, it may be said that there is some truth in Mr. Spencer's view. We do not believe that the individual's interest and the interest of the organism are commonly at variance. We hold that honesty is not only right, but is, ordinarily, the best policy also; that a man shall reap as he sows; that God's ordinary way of punishing is by the working of natural law and not by miracle, so that if a man abuse the laws of health he will suffer; if improvident he may starve, and will certainly have to beg. There is much rational sanction for conduct in the nature of things. Further than this, there is the fear of social ostracism, and the danger of falling into the hands of the police. These furnish wholesome restraints upon conduct. Again, Mr. Kidd probably over-emphasizes the pure selfishness of man. Doubtless there is at least a modicum of altruistic feeling which is natural to man. He is not wholly vile. This is one thing we had in mind in saying that Mr. Kidd's method could to some ex-

tent be separated from his results. For it is one thing to say that conscience is only developed instinct and that the idea of obligation has its origin in experience, and quite a different thing to say that the idea of oughtness being ultimate, experience has educated the conscience and filled up the categories of obligation. The former view would no doubt invalidate the moral argument and undermine the authority of conscience. For suppose we grant that conscience is a growth, a development from experience, and that we see its rudimentary forms in the instincts of animals; man then follows his instincts, *i. e.*, his conscience, just as animals do. But the difference is, that man has also his reason to reckon with, and if he finds that his instincts are irrational, or, in other words, if he explains away his conscience, he will no longer follow what it dictates. On the other hand, it is conceivable that we may have an obligatory morality based upon a theistic conception of the universe, without at the same time excluding the idea of development and the function of experience from the moral life. Given conscience, it may be that God speaks through it with increasing clearness, just as, for example, he spoke to the Jewish people with ever-increasing fulness of revelation.

Mr. Spencer and the evolutionary ethic may be right in contending that experience has played an important part in developing the moral sentiments. But, as M. Molinari, in his little book on *Religion*, points out, the conscience must be armed as well as enlightened, and while it may be the function of science and political economy to enlighten the conscience, it is only religion that can arm it with authority. Experience can teach expediency but not obligation. It may back up its teachings by the sanctions of worldly prudence expressed in very high terms. It may teach that the individual's interest is in the majority of cases identical with the interest of the social organism. But what we want is an ethic that will explain the ultimate ethical problem, the idea of obligation, without destroying the feeling of obligation, and will (in order to secure progress, so far as the present discussion is concerned) compel the individual to subordinate his own interests to the interests of the social organism in those cases where they seem to be at variance.



This leads us to the second of the alternatives mentioned above, namely, the conflict between reason and conscience. How can we settle this difficulty?

Our position is analogous to that of the theologian who makes his final appeal to the teaching of the church or to the words of Scripture. Not that in so doing he dishonors reason: in a certain sense reason must be the "seat of authority in religion," the final court of appeal, for it is only by the use of the reason that we decide that the teaching of the church or of the Scriptures is to be accepted as authoritative and ultimate. But having once constituted the church or the Bible as the ultimate authority in matters of religious faith, having once by the use of reason found an infallible norm, it is illogical to appeal back again to the reason to correct the norm. There cannot be two norms. The difference between rationalists and their opponents is not that the former make their appeal to reason while the latter walk by faith (the one appeals to reason as much as the other), but rather that the ratiocinative faculty demands of the latter that they submit to the decision of the higher court, while the former do not see sufficient ground for this submission. Either position is rational enough. The irrational position is that which first sets up the Bible or the church as the constituted norm of religious truth and then, having accepted such truth *in toto*, rejects it *in partibus*, or which having declared "Lo, here is a greater, let us hear him," turns again from Master to disciple. Just as the consistent theologian, having "proved all things," and having decided upon rational grounds that the teaching of the Scriptures or of the church is infallible in all matters of faith and practice, does not then seek to wrest the things therein which are hard to be understood; so here, having convinced ourselves by a broad survey, by a study of all the elements concerned, that the higher reason tells us to follow the dictates of conscience, we will no longer be troubled that the lower reason speaking only in the name of present worldly interest bids us pursue a policy of selfish individualism. This is, of course, only another way of saying that the individual's apparent present interests are disregarded only in order to further his real welfare. The individual submits to supernatural sanctions

of conduct, not perhaps because such conduct as is enforced is pleasing, but because it is rational; because, that is, everything considered, such conduct is best for him, will contribute most to his welfare.

We are not now seeking to show that there can be no adequate basis for morality apart from the sanctions of religion. We do not believe that there can be—and the agnostics' recent answer to the question, "Why lead a moral life?" has not tended to weaken our opinion—but this is not here the question. What we here maintain is, that in order to arrive at the knowledge of man's true welfare, *everything* must be taken into account; and, if our world-view includes the ideas of God, and immortality, and the authority of conscience, then the antinomy between conscience and the lower or hedonistic reason vanishes. The apparent antinomy which exists between conscience and the lower reason, which is identical with self-interest, is swallowed up in the higher unity of the practical reason. Scale this height, and the whole outlook is wonderfully changed. Stand upon this vantage-ground, and Mr. Kidd's paradoxes disappear.

Take socialism, for example: Mr. Kidd holds that "the only social doctrines current in the advanced societies of to day which have the assent of reason for the masses are the doctrines of socialism. These doctrines may be . . . . utterly destructive to the prospects of future progress and to the future interests of society; but . . . . this is no concern of the individual whose interest it is, not to speculate about a problematical future for unborn generations, but to make the best of the present for himself, according to his lights." In other words, the conditions which favor the progress of the race are distinctly antagonistic to the welfare of the masses of that race, and these conditions, therefore, have no sanction in reason. It seems a paradox that the conditions under which social progress is possible are without the sanction of reason, while social conditions which reason does justify are not only impracticable, but would effectually stop progress. Is progress, then, an evil? Or is rationality an evil? Or is there something the matter with the thesis that the only conditions under which progress is possible are irrational? At any

rate, the fact remains, that man has continued to progress, and with the full use of his reason. Take the view above indicated, and man's long and weary uphill march is justified; otherwise his toil was unreasonable and foolish. May it not be that it is the existence of conditions which would stop progress that is unreasonable as well as impracticable?

For if it be true, as Mr. Kidd acutely points out, that the materialistic socialism of the school of Karl Marx is really the purest kind of individualism, why not consistently carry out the principle? These men are socialists, not from love of their fellow-men and the disinterested motive of promoting their welfare, but from the desire for "happiness in the Benthamite sense of plenty of pigs' wash." If, then, we proceed on the principle of individualism, selfishness, competition, struggle for life (that is, under conditions of progress); if we adopt

——— "the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can,"

why not, then, let the masses and "the four hundred," labor and capital, the have-nots and the haves, fight it out as best they can, and so insure progress? But if, on the other hand, the strong yield to the weak through the operation of altruistic sentiment, then why not extend the application of this principle to the furthest limit, so as to take into consideration the future conditions and progress of the race? If it is the interest of the individual simply "to make the best of the present, according to his light," why, then, should I consider the masses? But, if I do consider the masses, why not consider the condition of the whole social organism, say two hundred years hence?

*Social Evolution* will be of value, not so much for the worth of its constructive results as for its illustration of one or two important principles. In the first place, it shows that social science must be approached from the side of ethics, and is to be treated in connection with moral philosophy rather than as a branch of political economy. I suppose it would be generally admitted that, as Professor Flint well says, "any proposed solution of a social problem would be sufficiently refuted as soon as it is shown logic-

ally to issue in immorality." The same writer continues, in the words of the Duke of Argyll: "In mathematical reasoning, the 'reduction to absurdity' is one of the familiar methods of disproof. In political reasoning, the 'reduction to iniquity' ought to be of equal value." (Flint, *Socialism*, p. 344.) If "the moral law is the law of progress," as all men, from Mr. Lecky to Mr. Lilly, seem to admit, it would seem to be necessary, first of all, to turn our attention to the study of conduct. What are right, and what are wrong, acts? Why are certain acts right, and certain others wrong? What is the ethical ideal? Has it changed; and, if so, how and why? What ought I to do, and what to leave undone? And *why ought I* to do either? Granted that a certain line of conduct will bring about certain results, how insure such conduct? The answer to these questions involves much. It involves a theory of the universe. One cannot get rid of metaphysic by turning one's back upon it. The fundamental social problem is an ethical problem, and the fundamental ethical problem is metaphysical.

Again, Mr. Kidd's book is an illustration of the vagueness and uncertainty attaching to the study of social phenomena. Men, young men, college men especially, are continually turning away from the study of metaphysics and theology to social science and political economy, because, they say, they want something practical, substantial, solid; they want less speculation and larger results. They complain of the unfruitfulness of metaphysics and the uncertainty of theology, not seeing that if there is ever to be certainty and agreement about anything it must begin with those primary convictions which underlie all social systems, and that just in proportion as there is disagreement as to fundamental questions will there be divergence and confusion in the systems built upon them. And not only so; not only do men apply different principles, but they read the facts very differently. So that in social science we have not only the variant systems arising from the various standpoints of their authors, but we have in addition to this the manifold differences arising from disagreement as to the facts themselves. I have spoken of the divergence between Mr. Kidd and Professor Drummond. But what are we



to think when Mr. Kidd attributes progress to the influence of religion, and Mr. Charles H. Pearson regards it as one evidence of progress that religion is dying out; when Mr. Kidd holds that progress is inevitable and has been due to altruism which has brought about increased rivalry and competition, and Mr. Pearson asserts that state socialism is unavoidable and with it the cessation of competition? The recent discussions of social questions by Mackenzie, Drummond, Flint, Pearson, and Kidd furnish sufficient illustration of the divergent views that prevail in regard to human society. A recent experience in reading these books has made me long to flee from this region of "noise and smoke" back to the peace and certainty of the "eternal verities" and has convinced me more than ever that one needs to have a comprehensive grasp of the problems of philosophy and Christian theology before attempting to grapple with the difficulties of social science. One should have his lamp lit and his loins girt and his bearings fixed before setting out for this misty, confusing region.

Finally, it is only in the light of a Christian theology that social problems can be solved. Grant the rationality of religion and the truth of Christianity, and Mr. Kidd's paradoxes disappear and his book furnishes an ingenious witness to the presence of "God in history." Instead of saying that progress depends upon ethical ideas which derive their sanction from a theistic construction of the universe, we may say that God works in history by putting in the hearts of men certain intuitive ethical ideas which, acted upon, lead to progress. Thus far apart from Revelation. But we may go a step farther and use the same line of argument in reference to the nature and mission of the church, and say that the church is the line along which God works in history toward the redemption of the world, since the church is the medium which God has chosen for the spread of those ethical ideas on which moral growth and social evolution depend. Still further, the Christian view of the world harmonizes for us what our author considers an inherent antagonism, since the view of life which the Christian ethic presents, while insuring the continually developing life of the social organism, at the same time provides a way of salvation for the individual. The Christian

scheme not only rationalizes altruism; it glorifies the individual. The individual in order to realize his own best interests (pure individualism) is, according to the Christian scheme, bound also at the same time to manifest that "brotherly love" (altruism), which is the life of the community and the condition of progress. And conversely, in the manifestation of that "love of the brethren" which has its root in "the love of God," the individual attains to that perfect happiness which passeth knowledge. It is along such lines as these, and along such lines alone, that the problems of social evolution can be solved.

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